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"LA NUIT"
By Henri Fantin-Latour (French)

—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris



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Colors in Nature

By

CHARLES LOUIS BORGMEYER

IN the presence of work by Besnard that of the average painter passes unseen. One can imagine what would happen to a Cazin, an Iwill or even a Corot if hung near his impudent colors. That is a risk that is run in sending pictures to the Salon, for example, where thousands of pictures hang on miles of wall space in two, often three rows. Imagine, how bewildered this kaleidoscopic hodge-podge would leave your mind; how untrue your sense of color would become; how almost impossible it would be to even see the pictures that come under the heading of "charming," "tender," etc.

An artist paints for the Salon or other great exhibitions with this killing by contrast in mind, and often it happens that the pictures seen by the public have lost much of the sweetness and charm of the usual work of the painter.

Besnard has had a struggle not only against the opposition of the public, but for years he had to defend his opinions against the prejudices of his fellow painters. He has maintained his views with great valor and some of his early errors finally turned to the advantage of his talent. An artist thorough in training, an exact and firm draughtsman, a delicate and powerful col-



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orist, he has gained for himself a position to be envied. He is undoubtedly of high order, but not a supreme master. His decorations are probably his best work.

He is a Member of the Société Nouvelle, the strongest society among the many that exhibit during the season in Paris. Every member is a man of talent. Many of the names we have grown familiar with are members of this Nouvelle Société—Sargent, Gay and Alexander (Americans); Morrice (Canadian); Carrière, Besnard, Cottet, Menard, Henri Martin, La Touche, Lucien Simon, Aman-Jean, Rodin, Troubetzkoy, etc. The Luxembourg undoubtedly owns pictures from each of these men, but space is so limited in the present gallery that there is practically no room to grow until they move to their new quarters. Everyone so loves this little seeable gallery that the day of moving will not be one of un-

alloyed joy. The *Petit Palais* is really the Gallery where modern art has or will have its greatest chance to expand, so M. Henri Lepauz, the Director, tells me. They rightly call these great museums "the great nurseries of painting" of our time.

Some of Besnard's critics claim that although he has the good merit of impudence and is not a neutral spirit trenched behind indifference and irony, still he dares with difficulty. They feel a secret discord, a fluttering of the will. To them he seems to advance and recede, without a well-fixed rule, not seeing clearly himself; not assured in his audacities. They say he is like an enthusiast who shouts in the midst of soft voices and then blushes. His lyricism is neither disturbing nor tranquil, now one, now the other, excessive, then timid, tossed about from the simple and cordial to the eccentric. He is a prolific painter and he

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(Thomas Hudson (1701-1779))

still may grow less "impudent" and then please—nobody. The critics scold because a man follows along in line with others; then they scold when he sidesteps. "What is the poor painter to do?"

"*Port d'Alger*" has an over-supply of color, especially pink, a color nature uses sparingly.

LA TOUCHES, GASTON (French) — "*Les Cygnes*."

All his very early days were spent at St. Cloud, where he still has his studio. How much of an impression the beautiful gardens and Versailles made upon his mind shows very plainly in his later works, where the feeling of both places is constantly confronting us. It grows monotonous telling the story of difficulties overcome, but his varies a little from the usual, in that he had his own way early.

His parents violently opposed his paint-

ing. He violently opposed all their plans, so things came to a deadlock and he stayed home, earning two francs a week by keeping busy about the house and garden. With a half smile and twinkling eyes he said to M. — one day: "My dear, good parents! Everything was against them. By living in the kitchen I was seized with admiration for the beauties of the still-life around, the gleaming copper pans, the earthenware brown by the fire, the play of light on all these inanimate objects. I kept on painting all the same, with hairless brushes on stray bits of wood and old box-lids; and those who knew the family kitchen at that time will remember the walls covered with my studies of saucepans, skinned rabbits, cabbages and every conceivable thing."

At one time he was intensely keen for all things real, and all imaginative things in pictures were criminal. "Nothing counted



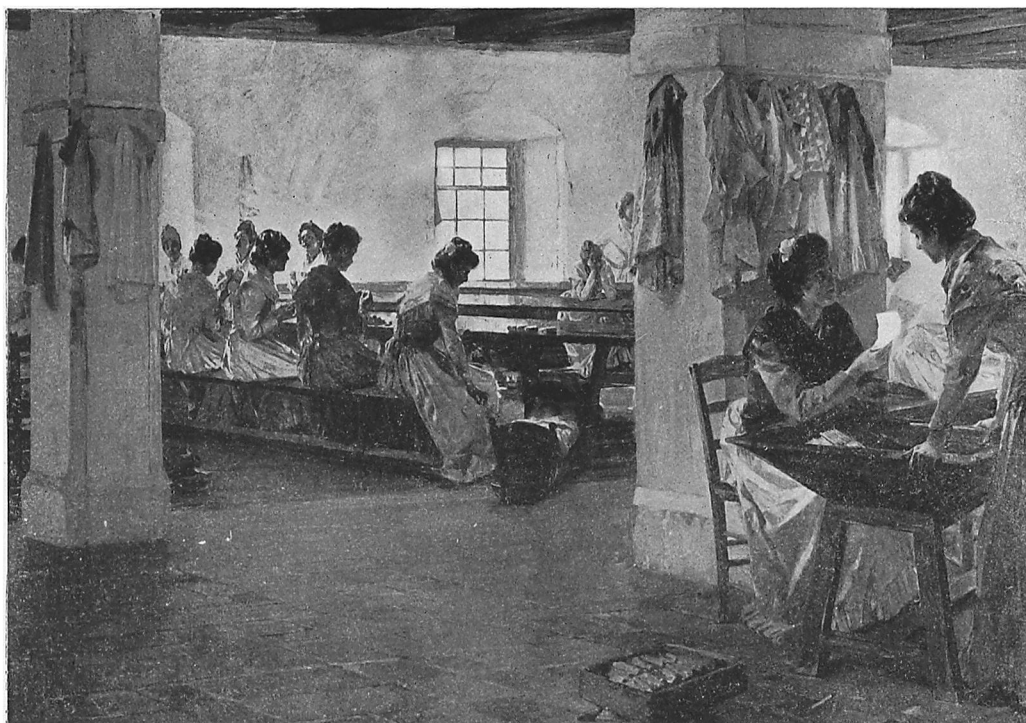
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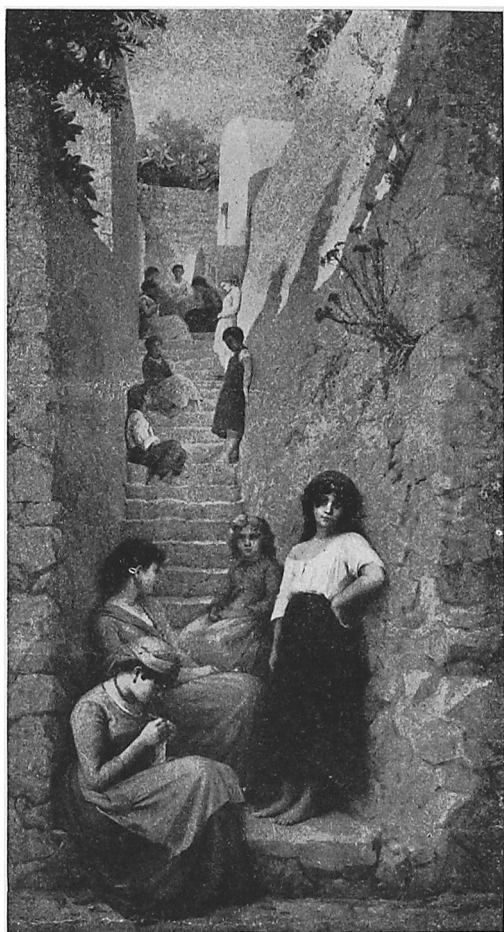
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By Walter Gay (American)

—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris



UN COIN D'OMBRE A CAPRI
By Jean Benner (French)
—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris

save that which was due to direct observation of nature itself; work done from the model," and at this time he treated everything with the fiercest realism, but gradually his ideas changed until he came into his present manner. One feels the dazzle of his pictures physically, so as to be almost unhappy before them. A pitiless splendor, not without charm, all the shades of the prism with the violence of the rose window of a cathedral pierced by the rays of broad sunlight—an extraordinary colorist.

Most of his pictures are problems of light, in the play and counterplay of reflections. His works give the feeling of an

Miss Phoebe Snow,
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extremely nervous, excitable, impressionable man, but withal a man of taste, delicacy and refinement.

He is found fault with because of his facility for one thing. Those who demand a firm foundation to start with say he has never had any instruction, that his designs are not sufficiently precise or strong enough for easel pictures, but suffice for his fantastic *genre*; that he shocks in his large works, which are peopled with nudes treated with a sovereign disdain for form and a rudimentary sense of relief. They charm his imagination and temperament and lead him beyond all bounds; that between his talents and his aspirations the step is too great. La Touche's art is particularly a matter of taste. Everyone admits that he is a born colorist; that he knows marvelously well the use of his materials. Water colors he uses so personally that no one has been able to imitate him, except occasion-

ally by a happy accident. His pictures are spirited and ardent and the decorative qualities are brilliantly employed. To be handled roughly by the public is better than to be ignored.

"*Les Cygnes*" and "*Fete de nuit*" show his manner very well. The latter is a scene of fireworks on the water. Amorous couples in boats guided by fauns glide past us. A work filled with light, air and color seen through La Touche's own infatuated vision. It is absolutely personal in everything and the artist was so interested with it as a whole that he made himself a part of it. In other words, he got into the picture himself.

GRANIE, JOSEPH (French)—"*Portrait de Mlle. Moreno.*"

This is a portrait of Mlle. Marguerite Moreno of the Comedie Francaise and was exhibited in the Salon of 1900. Granie follows the lead of the Germans of the Six-



PORTRAIT DE MADAM SECONDE WEBER
By René Gilbert (French)

—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris

teenth Century and almost equals them in technique and modeling. It is this which gives to his work a particular value.

CABANEL, ALEXANDRE (French) — "*La Naissance de Venus*."

Although Cabanel has been dead more than twenty years, his "*Birth of Venus*" is still hung in the Luxembourg, and with Gérôme and Bouguereau, forms a group of what was probably the best among the modern classic and traditional painters. These men add to the sensation perceived by the eye and the mind, the uncertain acquisitions of experience and education, which have created a wholly imaginary objective world. The qualities of composition and technical perfection, the refined elegance of drawing, fascinated him.

Cabanel was enamoured by beautiful

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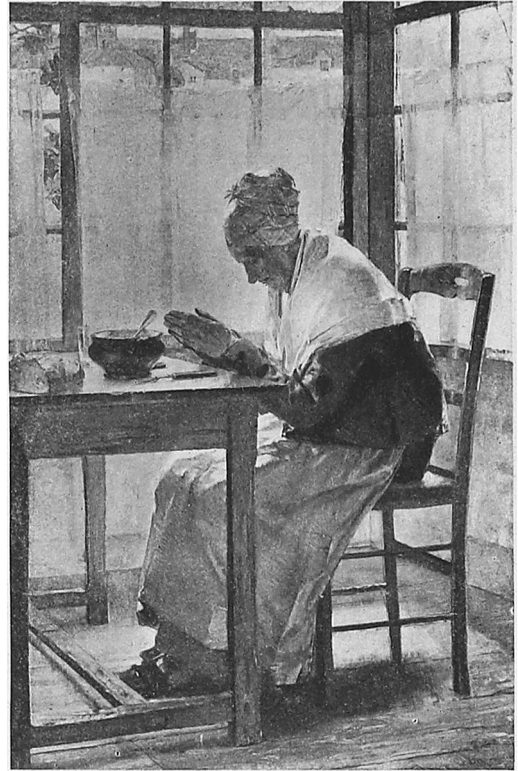
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mythological nudes, harmonious lines and the tender warmth of feminine flesh.

"La Naissance de Venus" was painted in 1863 and is one of the most charming pieces of the nude painted during the time when nudes were very much in favor. The quality of the color, the "blush" holds your attention. It is more graceful than Collins' "Floreal." It is superb in its beauty of line. Beauty of line is generally the graceful line of things. A horizontal or vertical line is just a line, just straight. It can be done with a ruler. Grace in line is suggested by one of nature's movements, while a straight horizontal line is not nature, but man's invention. Even the horizon is not straight; it curves. Vertical line, as it goes up far enough, curves. That is why cathedrals look so much higher than they are; they



"JAPONERIES"
By Walter Gay (American)

—Courtesy of The Luxembourg, Paris

make things smaller as they go up and this multiplies the sense of height.

In the "*Birth of Venus*" the goddess is represented not as arising from the sea, but gently, slowly awakening to life, floating on a wave, with her beautiful blonde hair mingling with its foam. Five little Loves, flying above in the blue morning sky, announce her birth through their conch shells. The picture is full of grace and it need scarcely be said, much more French than Greek in feeling, the attitude being conscious and the face arch in expression. Her head, with its long, fair hair, is full of the beauty of which Cabanel was so complete a master.

Cabanel's career was a happy and for-

tunate one. He received all the honors possible for France to give. He was given walls at the Pantheon and Hotel de Ville to decorate. His portraits of women are better than those of his men. He was a gentle, sympathetic man and had the gift of translating feminine character with all its natural grace and distinction. Perhaps his most admired portrait is that of the Duchesse de Vallombrosa and the simple and great effigies of the founders of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

It is a proof of Cabanel's power as a teacher and the love his gentle nature inspired in his scholars, that he for years directed the most popular *atelier* of the École des Beaux-Arts.